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AUTHOR White, Sylvia Ann
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ABSTRACT

The expansion of human potential and the accompanying increase in self-esteem and self-actualization is the key to emotional and physical health, social relations, learning problems, self-discipline, and future survival. Self-knowledge, obtained through such measures as keeping records of moods and through biomechanical devices, can enable teachers to understand their classroom behavior, administrators to know when they are apt to become impatient with staff, or students to know when to take a test. In the future, the basics of education might include the gathering and application of self-knowledge and techniques of relaxation and meditation. Similarly, increases in knowledge about brain chemistry will bring changes in human potential. Another "basic" subject of the future curriculum may be psychophysiology, the understanding of the relationship between the functioning of the body and the mind. Interest in psychic experiences and mysticism will move into the realm of science and education. The growing interest in transpersonal psychology is necessary in an era undergoing the transition from Newtonian physics to Quantum Mechanics, a view of the universe as an interconnected web of relation whose parts are defined only through their connection to the whole. Human nature is now at an evolving, networking stage. Educators must form one of the key networks or their usefulness will disappear. (KH)

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STUDENT HUMAN POTENTIAL: GOING BEYOND THE BASICS

by

Sylvia Ann White

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STUDENT HUMAN POTENTIAL: GOING BEYOND THE BASICS

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The expansion of human potential and the accompanying increase in self-esteem and self-actualization is the key to emotional and physical health, social relations, learning problems, self-discipline, and future survival. The humanistic psychology of Abraham Maslow shows that lower level needs relating to pure survival must be met before an individual or a society can attend to higher level needs and, ultimately, the need to become self-actualizing. Up to the present time, the concern of humankind was with survival: the cavemen and the dinosaurs; knights and dragons; civilization and barbarians; haves and have-nots. The higher level needs of self-esteem and self-actualization could not be considered until now. The human overendowment of brain and body processes and capacities was not needed before. American poet and clergyman Thomas Merton has said, "What we have to become is what we already are."

One of the more concrete arenas of human potential expansions is in health and longevity. Health has a direct affect on human potential: Unhealthy people do not function at their maximum potential. Life expectancies are increasing and research in aging indicates that humans will reach their biological natural lifespan by the twenty-second century--a lifespan of about 120 years. This is about ten to twelve times the age of puberty, which is the proportionate lifespan seen in

other animal forms. Children born in the 1980's may well live to see the year 2100.

In the twenty-first century, preventive medicine will be one of the fastest growing medical specialties. An important aspect of preventive medicine will be that of self-knowledge. One method of gathering self-knowledge is through the study of moods. An organized study of one's moods will provide the person with data to know what time of day the physiological state is at its optimum, what kinds of disturbances create anxiety and disrupt concentration, and when it is best to do demanding, difficult work, or when one should run errands, sharpen pencils or go for lunch.

Self-knowledge can also be obtained through biomechanical devices. Information can be fed to a computer and a projection of the individual's state can be obtained. If sufficient data is accumulated and analyzed, a baseline state for the next few hours can be predicted. Projections could then be made to allow an individual to consider the effects of various conditions on physiological and psychological functioning -- conditions such as drinking coffee, consuming alcohol, using drugs, playing tennis, watching television, meditating or sleeping.

Self-knowledge obtained through record keeping and through biomechanical measurements could enable teachers to study their moods during class, administrators to know when they are apt to get impatient or angry with staff members, drivers to know when judgment was poor, or students to know when to take a test.

Self-knowledge will enable everyone to recognize when they are experiencing stress and anxiety and can help them to get through each day more calmly. Stress and anxiety are problems endemic to modern society. Their cumulative affect is made worse when we ignore them. Lower level biological needs, such as anxiety, hunger or nagging pain motivate a person to attend to these needs. However, consciousness can ignore these messages so that a person can confront external life and death issues. This capacity is overused in modern living and results in the prevalent societal diseases of migraine, ulcers, heart disease and other signs of stress. Meditation and techniques of progressive relaxation help a person to relax and to become aware of body tension.

The physiological and psychological benefits of Transcendental Meditation have been well-documented and include changes in metabolic rate, decrease in oxygen consumption, decrease in blood pressure, more rapid recovery from stress, relief from insomnia and changes in brain wave patterns. During higher level cognitive processing, when a person is mentally alert, the brain is producing Beta waves, which measure 14 to 30 cycles per second. During meditation, Alpha waves are found, which measure 8 to 13 cycles per second and indicate brain idling. Brain production of Alpha waves for one or two minutes a day can add twelve to fifteen years to a person's life. The basics of education in the future might well include the gathering and application of self-knowledge and techniques of relaxation and meditation.

Increases in knowledge about brain chemistry will bring changes in human potential. The isolation and understanding of brain proteins and hormones is pointing toward possible development and availability of positive drugs. These include a nasal spray to enhance memory, hormones to increase attention span, drugs to heighten creativity, brain proteins as a cure for drug addiction, a more effective treatment for epilepsy and treatment or elimination of many forms of schizophrenia. The study of the brain is showing that emotions are coded in brain chemicals. To think of emotions as merely chemical reactions may make humans seem less human but it also makes the design seem more marvelous.

Neurobiologists are showing that aggression has a chemical basis and that violent behavior can be controlled by restoring the balance of the brain's chemicals. Early environment and experiences have an influence on biochemical balance. Repeated childhood experiences of aggressive behavior may result in conditioning the body to produce more of the hormone that is present during aggressive acts. Ethical issues prevent application of some of the studies of brain chemicals but the research does present increased understanding of human behavior, with implications for expanding human potential in new ways.

Recent studies of altruistic behavior have indicated the possibility of a sensitive period for the development of the emotion of empathy, corresponding to the maturation of structures in the limbic and frontal lobes of the brain. The more

primitive reptilian brain governs the ritualistic and hierarchical aspects of life but the more recently evolved limbic brain governs the emotions and altruistic aspects of life. Evolutionarily speaking, humankind should evolve into more altruistic beings. The compassionate, altruistic qualities of humans are syntropic; the selfish qualities are entropic. Humankind is in the universe for its syntropic functioning.

Even more revolutionary than studies of brain chemistry are studies of the mind. This is the beginning of the golden age of brain, mind and body research. Until now, the conscious receptors have not been educated to take in the total amount of information and the multiple levels of knowing and feeling of which humans are capable, and that are needed for modern decision making. When people cut themselves off from their sensory being, they cut themselves out of the moral flow of the Universe and lose their capacity for empathy.

Mind research has included studies of accelerating mental processes. In an Accelerated Mental Process, a person learns to utilize the brain's ability to process millions of images in just microseconds and to increase the rate of thought and the amount of subjective experience beyond what is ordinarily possible within a unit of clock-measured time. Imagery is important in this process. A human being has a natural capacity to think in images as well as in words. There is a widespread capacity for imagery in young children. The present emphasis in education on verbal processes inhibits the capacity to think in images. Fortunately, this capacity can be reac-

tivated. Implications are that skills and learning can be increased through practical use of imagery and of the Accelerated Mental Process state. This could range from five minutes to several hours of practice a day. Another basic of future curricula will be training in the use of imagery and Accelerated Mental Process.

Sustained creativity is prevented when thinking is done only through conceptualization. Concepts get in the way of percepts. Some of the most creative conceptualizers are also the finest perceptualizers; they have kept the sensory refinement of childhood and have extended it into their adult years. Sensory acuity and perception is increased through relaxation and imagery. Learning must occur as a total body experience. The brain takes in more information than just perceptions and sensory data.

Most people presently use only about ten percent of their physical capacity and five percent of their mental potential. To be a planetary person in the world of the future means to be part of a wholly different modality of knowing and being. Psychophysiology is the meeting of Eastern and Western thought through the study of the integration of the body and the body image. People living in today's urban societies decline in physiological use of their bodies by about 75 percent between the ages of three and seventeen. With this disuse of the body comes an inhibition of the motor cortex and, therefore, because of the diffusion phenomenon of the brain, a parallel inhibition of thinking, feeling, knowing, sensing and learning. In the

body dynamics of psychophysiology, body awareness increases through movement experiences. When there is an increase in body fluidity and the person is learning, learning will occur much more rapidly. Psychophysiology is another basic for the curriculum for maximizing human potential.

Interest in psychic experiences and mysticism is moving into the realm of science and education. Metapsychiatry is the interface between psychiatry and mysticism and identifies common grounds for research. It includes the study of extrasensory perception, telepathy, biofeedback, voluntary control of visceral states, biocycles, energy fields, kirlian photography, the physiological and psychological effects of meditation and other altered states of consciousness, and atmospheric effects upon behavior.

In a recent survey of psychiatrists, 31 percent indicated that they believed strongly in psychic manifestations, and an additional 48 percent indicated an acceptance of the possibility that they could exist. Psychiatrists and directors of medical schools supported the idea that studies in metapsychiatry be included in psychiatric education.

Transpersonal psychology is the study of transpersonal experiences, or experiences which extend or go beyond the personal or the individual. A study in the field of social sciences revealed that 35 percent of the persons surveyed reported having had experiences of feeling close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift them out of themselves, and

half of those persons reported having had such experiences often.

Western futurism has suffered from the lack of metaphysics. Transpersonal psychology has shown that the innate capacities of the average human have barely been tapped. Too many persons in the Western world are not yet familiar with the emerging post-Newtonian image. The scientific world is presently involved with a paradigm shift from Newtonian physics to Quantum Mechanics. Newtonian physics was concerned with tangible physical matter, objectivity and certainty. Quantum physics theory abolishes notions of fundamentally separated objects. It involves the concept of all humans as participators rather than observers. It views the universe as an interconnected web of relations whose parts are defined only through their connections to the whole. This scientific model may well serve as the new cultural model. Most Western thought has had no sense of a priori external laws to serve as a guide.

Evolutionary futurism involves the theory of change and applies principles of evolution to the study of the future. The process of evolution is predictive--it has moved from molecule to cell to animal to human. The evolutionary perspective shows that quantum transformations are traditional in nature. Incremental changes are punctuated by sudden jumps; evolution proceeds by sudden changes and by quantum leaps. Crises precede transformations; a system crisis stimulates a massive innovation. Positive innovations speed up at the time

of a systems change. If one member of a species learns a new behavior, the causative field for the entire species is changed. The morphic field eventually becomes so saturated that one more individual acting in a certain way can change the whole field, affecting all members. A holistic unconsciousness is created and, if just one more individual changes, the whole field of consciousness changes. In evolution there is an inherent tendency toward higher consciousness, freedom and order. Nature evolves whole systems out of separate parts by the natural tendency to cooperation and synergy. As networks connect, there is a synergistic flip of the social pattern to a new, more complex order.

Human nature is evolving and the nature of nature is to increase intelligence. Single cells in the earth's early seas formed multicellular organisms, fish came onto the dry land, and humans are reaching into both inner and outer space. Consciousness has risen at every step intellect, individuality and intuition fuse to form a higher stage of consciousness and human consciousness can be aligned with the intelligence that is creating the universe through love of each other as integral parts of the same creation.

Change begins with first bringing about change in the individual selves and next through contacts with others; individuals create networks, networks join and a quantum leap is made. Humankind is at the stage of networking, before the quantum leap in its own potential. Educators must form one of

the key networks or they will disappear with the dinosaurs, the dragons, and the single-celled organisms of earth's early seas.

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